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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3798
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3447
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 8689
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 2894
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS BANGKOK 000082

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR P, EAP, EB
NSC FOR MORROW
TREASURY FOR OASIA
COMMERCE FOR EAP/MAC/OKSA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: LEGISLATOR OFFERS TO HELP SPREAD USG VIEWS

¶1. (SBU) On January 5, Dr. Vachara Phanchet, a member of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) and Secretary of its Committee on Foreign Affairs, called on the Ambassador seeking cooperation between his committee and the Embassy on issues including trade and restoring Thailand's reputation in the wake of the September coup. The Ambassador welcomed the opportunity to keep channels of communication open but bluntly advised that the current government must closely adhere to its schedule for restoring democracy and immediately lift martial law as it has repeatedly pledged to do. Vachara acknowledged that the regime has sometimes failed to "meet words with actions" but added that Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda "wants to see everything go as planned." Vachara did not make any attempt to defend martial law.

¶2. (SBU) Vachara said that Prem believes that additional economic ministers need to be named. This would mean that Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula would likely lose his position as Finance chief. Vachara complained that Pridiyathorn visited the NLA after the crash in the stock market following the December 18 application of strict capital controls "unrepentant for his mistake." When we expressed our concern about proposed amendments to the Foreign Business Act, Vachara claimed that the NLA "will stop them just as we stopped the attempt to continue the national lottery."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Vachara is a wealthy (chairman of the Sittipol Group, joint venture partner in Thailand with Mitsubishi Motors), young (he pointed out that he is the "fourth youngest" NLA member) former Vice Minister of Public Health during the Thaksin regime. He was anxious to let us know that he speaks regularly with Prem and PM Surayudh (whom he says he is seeing tonight) and is open to USG views including the necessity of lifting marital law and holding elections as soon as possible. He invited embassy officers to meet with his committee whenever we have any issues we think the NLA should consider. While he is probably not as important as he thinks he is, we will avail ourselves of his offer to help disseminate our views.
BOYCE